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الموضوع

Battles don't stop until everyone is dead
 Hatred and fire is what they've been fed
 When you hear the bomb falling
 It makes a horrific squalling
 When you hear the bomb fall
 You know it's not near you at all
 But the sound is so scary, you are so afraid
 You try so hard to be brave
 Because you hear the sound, you know you
 are alive
 So Catch your breath, to breathe you strive.

The sound of a bomb falling, how to describe it? Just like the cartoons, honestly. What was important to understand is if you can hear the bomb falling then it's not falling directly on you. I don't know how scientifically true that is but it seemed to work for us.

To survive was to keep moving, never staying in one place too long, limit going out to only emergencies and praying your name is not written that day.

KORANI

We had many bad and scary moments in the battle. Getting shot at by snipers and mortars and bombs, but from first hand experience.

I can testify as devastating and as many lives were lost I truly believe they tried to spare as many lives as possible. In civilian areas, you didn't typically see the double tap bombing technique, there was no chemicals used in civilian areas and snipers typically shot at the ground as a warning not to come closer.

This should be a time of unity
 we should not have to deal with this lunacy
 whatever happened to true brotherhood
 Loving and helping each other, that we should.
 Some say they act like animals
 But more like cannibals
 Sucking the blood out of everything
 Not a drop of humanity lingering
 Even animals have a heart
 In this world playing their part
 There is no place in the world for the men in black
 They have been crushed to dust ensuring
 never a comeback.

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The fact is, in order to do good you must do evil in some circumstances. I truly believe that war could not have been avoided but from what I saw, I truly believe ~~that~~ there was minimum casualties, in my un-professional opinion. I am grateful for that war. I truly believe it saved me and my family as it was our only escape.

Mortars crashing

- Cannon fire cracking

So Artillery is never lacking

The earth shakes with artillery fire

People behind them seem to never tire

Snipers aiming

Missiles flaming

Every corner could be your last

The only thing going through your mind is
the sound of the blast.

Rocks and debris falling down on your head

Much more dangerous than the monsters under
your bed.

The people only needed as pawns

You get a little quiet waiting for the dawn

KORANI

In this game of chess there can be only one winner.

You only hope your team is not the quitter.

The soldiers came in on that day

They kept the evil that lay there at bay

Men standing in aggravation

Feeling the unappreciation

Men tired, hungry and missing their wives

Men with scars on their faces and scars on their lines

Men all standing in a line

It was time to take the city, yes it was time

Men ready to invade

Their wits had been sharpened and so had their blade.

Sweat dripping down their faces

All standing in Ranks, standing in their places.

As these men wave goodbye with their guns

The other men left tail between their legs, leaving in shun.

Men have dominated man to his injury.

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I thank God everyday that me and my children, my girls and my boy survived this battle. Yes, I do feel guilty for the many times we were all huddled in a corner of a room. Everyone panicked and crying. I would be holding everyone "Shhh...it's ok, it'll be over soon." or singing songs to try to relax them. Yes I feel guilty for putting them through all of this but to this day I still feel like I made the right decision and I don't believe there was another option.

Also, I would like to add that I don't believe we would have survived the battle if it wasn't for my husband and his brother. Of course, it was their fault we were there to begin with but I definitely owe appreciation for this specific time. You see, I didn't know what was going on outside the house and they would typically find empty houses to move into and I would make an educated guess of which ones were the best. Strangely enough, the 4-story building that got bombed next to us, my husband was trying to insist that we move into that building as it was safer.

KORANI

I told him, "no, I will never move there." I wanted to stay in my single family home. In an apartment building you never know who your neighbors are or what is being stored there. You might end up being collateral damage because something or someone there is worth everyone else dying. This happens a lot because Islamic State would hide weapons, foods, fuels, or important military figures with families and civilians. Everyone in that building died that day, even in the basement. My husband wanted to move there because of the presence of the basement. If the airplanes wanted to destroy anything and everything, they would succeed.

Yes the battle was hard, daily life consisted of almost every type of weapon. With nothing left to do we would guess what types of missiles were being used, what size mortars, we "airplane watch" instead of bird watch. War seems to be a necessary evil.

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Your black flag nation ended with a blow
Spilling the blood of the innocent, all
just a show.

You thought you were a martyr
With the blood of the innocent you bartered
Going to heaven you thought you would
But you're gone to hell just as you should.

One day we woke up to the birds singing
instead of mortars. It was the first time in
several months. The quiet actually made us afraid.
We didn't know how to react. After a few
hours we realized there must be some sort of
peace talks. We were so excited! I don't think
I've ever felt so much excitement in my heart.
The war must be over! We celebrated by playing
outside, something we couldn't do with bombs
falling. We also took the opportunity and filled
everything and anything with water as we didn't
know what tomorrow or even the next hour would bring.

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After a few days, I got news from my husband's brother that the peace talks had failed. That night we all sat with food in front of us but none of us could take a bite. We were sick and tired. I looked at the girls and on their faces I could see they were close to breaking. I tried to comfort them telling them just be patient and everything will be finished soon and if we die I wanted them to know that I love them and that I was so sorry. I had kept everyone there in order to survive, not to die. ■

As we sat quietly, we heard men start to scream in the streets "Allahu Akbar!" Screaming and screaming and they wouldn't stop. It made our blood freeze almost. It made our hairs stand up with true fear. A whole day and night the bombing didn't stop.

The best way to describe it was a roller coaster and those few days of peace we are climbing climbing and climbing to the last big drop of the ride. As you are climbing you don't think of the drop, you only look out at the city or mountains admiring the beauty.

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Then as the train falls, you just hold on tight as everything happens around you.

I don't know really what happened after that but I can only assume after such brutality Islamic state had ~~been~~ been beaten. Everyone was scrambling in the streets lighting anything and everything on fire and preparing to evacuate the city. The airplanes were flying low obviously keeping an eye on the evacuation process. We were afraid from both sides.

Death
Of
My Husband

KORANI

Taking lives and taking heads

Before you tuck your kids in bed

You must teach your children right and to
love each other

There should be no room for killing your brother

Taking happiness and spending your money

But you are sad and more realistically, lonely.

What gives you the right to take a life?

Just sitting and waiting, sharpening your knife.

You should spread rumors of life and good
health.

Living your life with love and wealth.

But now you dwell so deep below

No fame, no glory, nothing to show

You have lost everything including your
life.

Everyone hates you, especially your wife.

Your children have no memory of your
poison. Kiss good night.

Their mother will teach them wrong from right.

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I think at this point it's pretty obvious how I felt about my husband. He's almost like he hated me because I wouldn't support him and I hated him because of everything he had put us through.

I believe he brought P [REDACTED] and S [REDACTED] into the situation to make me feel jealous but that plan absolutely backfired on him. He saw my relationship with them and saw they only made me stronger. He began to hate them as well. He would spit on them and only refer to them as slaves, never using their names. I used Se to tell the girls to be patient that he would NOT survive the battle.

I knew he would not survive because to make-up for the loss of his manhood at home he would go to his friends with his fancy weapons and they all admired him, bringing him up. He would share his war stories and he was put on a pedestal. He desperately tried to bring us below him, to break us. But we had each other.

Strangely, the last time I saw him, it was as if he knew he was going to die. He never left the house depressed or scared. But that day he did-

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Before he left that day he said to me "please pray for my death." He knew I was telling the truth when I answered "Everyday." He knew I hated him and he knew why. He said to me exactly "Please keep praying because I know Allah will answer your prayers. He always answers the prayers of the victims of injustice." He believed that by me praying for his death, my prayer would be answered and he would be martyred. We both wanted him to die but for different reasons. Before he left that day he apologized very specifically for many things he knew he had done. He made it quick, but tried to make it meaningful. He cried and I held him.

I got news from his brother 4 days later that he had died the next day in an offensive attack on the battle front.

Of course, the news was difficult. I had spent all my time preparing for this very moment but how do you prepare for something like that? 5 days later I got a visit from one of his friends. He brought me a payment of \$300. I became so ANGRY!

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He's dead, he's in the past
 You can stick your payment straight up
 your ass.

I never accepted even one dollar from Islamic state. I didn't accept housing or food. Even during the siege they were passing around meat and potatoes and I wanted absolutely nothing from them. Now, they are bringing me \$300 because my husband died? I didn't want that disgusting, dirty, filthy \$ blood covered money.

Coming into today, I am still confused about how I feel about him, even a year later. Sometimes I pray for him to be hell bound and sometimes I pray for God to forgive him as only God can read hearts. Sometimes I make both those prayers in one day. But ~~what~~ what doesn't change is in those prayers I thank God that he's gone. I should replace my prayers of my husband with asking God to give me peace in my own heart.

KORANI

As I sit here finishing this chapter I can't keep the tears away. I'm not crying because of him but because I can't get passed him. I have no closure from everything as I sit here in a UNICEF camp in a tent, still in Syria. I feel like he's still winning because I think about it so much. How can I get closure sitting here? My hatred only grows and I just want to go home. I just want my mom and I just want my dad. I want to be able to forget everything, but I can't.

He may have won the battle, but I will win the war. I still have my children and hope ~~for~~ for their future. All he has is a bunch of dead people's admiration and a bomb dropped on his head.

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Leaving

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I am full of rage and retaliation

There is no room at all for derision

I wish I could kill each and everyone
of them

But instead I will fight them with my words
and with my pen

In every difficult moment, after every
blow from fate

Inevitably there are tremendous feelings
of hate

So I will not pick up a gun

I will not hurt anyone

I pray for my vengeance through the one
up above

The day in the ~~desert~~ desert in the back
of the truck, driving so fast to get to our
destination I was only hearing the closing
music to a movie where the hero won and
the happy ending goes to the credits. I don't see
myself as the hero but as the one who was saved,
finally being able to breathe.

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I felt strong, like I could survive anything life threw at me. I felt free like a bird with its mended wing. I felt relief and like the weight had been lifted from my shoulders. Not only because we had made it out of Islamic State but also because we made it out without any problems.

Back in Raqqa, I was constantly being told by my husband and by his brother that the Kurds, the ones fighting in Raqqa, would kill my son and me and the girls would be raped and kept prisoner. The idea of this really frightened me and I wasn't sure it was worth trying to escape again because of what happened in Prison in Raqqa. I was between a rock and a ~~hard~~ hard place. Would I be jumping from the lion's den directly into the lion's mouth? I really was so tired of making these decisions. I have made so many life and death decisions the last few years and I think I have a new wrinkle for all of them.

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So, at the end of the seige on Raqqa, just after my husband died, my husband's brother claimed his inheritance. He claimed S [REDACTED] as his inheritance. Life for S [REDACTED] went on as if my husband didn't die but now with a different man. I gave B [REDACTED] her freedom as if she didn't already have it after my husband died. She chose to stay with me and my kids. She knew I would get her home.

So, because S [REDACTED] was with my husband's brother we all left Raqqa together and went to a small village in Dier Ezzor. From there we were able to plan our escape, all of us together.

B [REDACTED] did most of the work on this I'd like to add. Once we got to our destination, I started trying to find someone we could trust. I saw my neighbor smoking cigarettes and found out he used to be in the Syrian Army. Bedna gave him her Uncle's phone number, the man contacted him. The man told her uncle he would get us out if her uncle could arrange a spot in the desert for the YPG to pick us up. That he did.

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My neighbor was having a hard time finding a smuggler to get us out because they all knew Islamic State would kill us all if we were caught.

3 smugglers all declined. I was able to convince my neighbor to take us out on his own. He wasn't a smuggler but he saw we desperately need his help. I was able to make him forget about the idea of being executed with 10 ounces of pure gold. The escape went without a hitch. The neighbor assured me the YPG wouldn't do the things my husband said they would but I still wasn't sure.

There was a truck waiting for us in the desert as promised. We were welcomed with water and a place to shower and a meal.

One night I had a bad dream
 A dream you wake with a scream
 I dreamt I woke as the only one
 In a city full of murderers that don't like fear
 I stand out like white on black
 I tried and tried but could never get back

KORANI

- I woke up from this dream of fear
- I woke up in the arms of a man in military gear
- I didn't wake up to a real reality
- I woke up to a real life purgatory.

Once we made it out, of course B [REDACTED], S [REDACTED] and A [REDACTED] were almost immediately taken to Iraq. They did not even give us the chance to say goodbye.

We were all crying and holding each other.

Se I Couldn't believe as good as they were being to us, giving us a nice place to stay, great food, etc they would just separate our family like this. In their defense, they didn't know everything we had all been through together.

After a few days, the American FBI came to talk to me. After 4 days or so of interviewing they said they would help us get home. So far I haven't seen that help.

We have been living at a camp for a while now with what seems no end in site. I had a short relationship with a member of the military here, I thought he could help us.

Even if he couldn't help us, Sex with him was liberating. I hadn't done something so "bad" as casual sex in years. It made it real to me that I was free to do what I wanted.

How can my children and I bare the sins
what a load on my shoulder, the sins of these men.
Another terrorist attack

From the nation of black

Everyone hates and for that we must be lynched.

Everyday the noose tightens, the knot is cinched.

We don't have a voice or a place

In this world we have no space

This is not fair, there is no one we hate

But everyone wants to serve us up on a plate.

Where I come from, you are innocent until proven guilty. Then why has my government left me here to be punished?! Why does it feel like we are waiting for nothing. This place is purgatory.